



# IN COMMAND

## Profile Fire Chiefs Association Member

### Thomas J. Richardson, Chief of Operations



*Thomas J. Richardson  
Chief of Operations*

Assistant Chief Tom Richardson was appointed to the FDNY on November 22, 1980. He was appointed the Chief of Operations in February 2019 after having served as the Chief of Training and the Chief of the Fire Academy. He is currently the Acting Chief of Department.

Tom was appointed to the job six weeks after his twenty first birthday. After completing the six weeks of training at the Fire Academy he was assigned to Engine Company 227 in Brooklyn. His first Company Commander was Captain Eddie Higgins. Ed was a man who demanded operational discipline and was a quintessential engine boss and an outstanding mentor. Other senior members who influenced Tom in his first assignment were FF Tom "Mad Dog" Laudicina, FF Eddie Collins, FF Gerry Dalton, FF John Pearson and FF Leon Phillips, just to name a few. Working in all of the other companies in Battalion 44 at the time, was truly a great experience as well.

Tom transferred to Ladder Company 102 in January of 1985. It was here that he began to study for Lieutenant, influenced again by a tremendous group of highly motivated members in both units, Engine 209/Ladder 102, the "Bedford Express". Ladder 102 had senior officers and was commanded by Captain Dennis Cross, a tremendous truck officer and teacher. After spending only 2 ½ years in Ladder 102, Tom had an opportunity to go to Rescue Company 2 in August of 1987. He was on the Lieutenants list at that point after taking the 1986 exam. After having spent his first almost 7 years working in two outstanding units with some of the best firefighters and fire officers, this was a great opportunity in preparation for promotion. Captain Ray Downey was the Company Commander, a strong leader with a great reputation and well respected by all. This was a formative experience working with Captain Downey and the other officers; Lt. John Vigiano, Lt. Artie Connolly, Lt. Craig Shelley, Lt. John Norman, Lt. Paul McFadden. The senior firefighters in R-2 were quite an influence on Tom. He could never fully express his appreciation for their mentoring but they

*continued on page 4*

## What's Inside

[President's Message](#)

[Secretary's Desk](#)

[View from the Top](#)

[Retirees Corner](#)

[New Members](#)

[Retired Members](#)

[COVID-19 Pandemic](#)


[Promotion Lists Status](#)

## President's Message

**George K. Healy**

The Board of the Fire Chiefs Association hopes this issue of In Command finds everyone healthy and safe. The past year has been challenging on so many levels. Many of us have experienced the loss of those close to us at the hands of this pandemic. With the wide scale availability of the vaccine we hopefully are getting closer to a more normal life. The Department very early in the vaccination process not only secured ample doses of the vaccine for the active members but remained focused on our retirees. Soon after we were afforded the opportunity to have family members vaccinated also. The Fire Chiefs Association heard from members both active and retired how much this meant to them. There was much praise for the Department and our IMT for the outstanding work they did. All those involved need to be commended.

The Fire Chiefs Association also needs to thank the leadership of our great Department for assisting us with our launch of virtual meetings. Beginning in January we took a step forward and began hosting our meetings virtually. This has been a great experience allowing us to continue our mission of uniting Chief officers educationally, fraternally and socially. Through these meetings we have once again experienced some level of normalcy and although virtually we have reconnected. These meetings have allowed our members to hear from our staff on how the Department is moving forward and fulfilling our mission despite the many challenges we have faced. We hope to continue with virtual meetings until we can be together once again.

Please continue to join us for our virtual meetings check our website and news letters for updates on our future events. At this point it seems reasonable that we will be back together for our annual golf outing in August and the fall outing in Montauk this September. Please continue to stay healthy and safe and we hope to see you soon. 

## The Secretary's Desk

**Daniel J. Sheehan**

The challenges of this year forced us to conduct our meetings virtually via Webex. We are grateful to our senior leadership for allowing us to use the official department platform. A big shout out to Chief Dave Morkal who was instrumental to get them off the ground. We couldn't have done it without him!

### January

Fire Commissioner Dan Nigro kicked off the first of our annual meetings. It had been 11 months between meetings, and although it took some getting used to, we managed to admit 126 FCA members into the meeting. Commissioner Nigro touched on many great topics. He expressed his gratitude to our dedicated men and women who kept the department running through illness, low staffing, and while surrounded by a staggering amount of death. He also gave a shout out to the IMT for their handling of the vaccine rollout. He was also very pleased with the way the members handled themselves during the demonstrations last year. As always, we appreciate the Commissioner (who has been a member of the FCA since the 1980's) for taking the time out to meet with us.

### February

Chief of Department John Sudnik was our guest speaker for our February meeting. Chief Sudnik who has been on Staff for 13 years, and is the former President of the FCA, thanked his executive staff and gave a rundown of all the units under his command: Operations, Training, Fire Prevention, Safety, Personnel, EMS Operations, and CTDP. He cited the challenges faced by the department during this unprecedented time, and discussed some of the tremendous accomplishments during the past year. He also welcomed the newest members of the Staff, Dean Koester - Ops, Mike Masucci - Personnel, Anthony Saccavino - Fire Prevention, and John Sorrocco - Bronx Borough Commander. We'd like to congratulate them and wish them the best of luck.

### March

Chief of Operations Tom Richardson stepped up as our special guest for the March meeting. Chief Richardson complimented the members for their

## **View from the Top**

### **John Sudnik, Chief of Department**

Service and sacrifice – it's in the DNA

Here we are Spring 2021 and I can't help but to think that, under normal circumstances, we would be focusing the bulk of our time on operational policy and strategy. But these are not normal times. Don't get me wrong – we must remain focused on our core competencies in order to protect our City, keep our members safe, and ensure the Department is running smoothly and efficiently. However, as the COVID pandemic continues to persist and seemingly dominate daily life, we have no choice but to continue preparing for future challenges – whatever they may be.

Fortunately, firefighters, fire officers, EMTs and paramedics are always up to the task. There is perhaps no other profession better equipped – figuratively and literally - to manage the sudden and acute consequences of large-scale catastrophes than our first responders. From day-one, the cognitive ability to respond to unknown danger is transfused into their blood, and implanted into their DNA. From the earliest days at the academy they are ingrained with the skills necessary to handle life or death situations safely and proficiently. They are trained to do their job under stress so they become accustomed to operating at life or death situations. These contrived abilities, along with God-given courage, provides guidance and purpose; and remains with them at all times - both on and off-duty. At every assignment, and in every rank, a first responder's professionalism and duty to act can always be counted on.

A few weeks before the tidal wave of the pandemic first hit New York City in the early Spring of 2020, our chief medical officer, Dr. Dave Prezant, estimated that staffing levels in the FDNY could potentially decline up to 40% at the peak of the surge, at a time when emergency response workload would be the greatest. The expected physical and psychological impact on our workforce was grave, and the dire outlook on our ability to respond was alarming. Even though an unrivaled challenge stood before us, I knew

we would handle it. I was certain that our firefighters, EMTs and paramedics would rise to the occasion. You may wonder, "How could you know?" – certainly a valid question considering we had not seen such widespread and contagious disease in over 100 years.

I attribute the confidence I had in our response to my experience 19 years earlier – when two commercial airliners were flown into two 110-story office buildings at the World Trade Center. Though it occurred a generation ago, that tragedy remains embedded in my DNA. On that fateful day, the stakes were never higher, the conditions never more severe, and the risks never greater. As the world watched in utter shock, FDNY members courageously responded without hesitation, put it all on the line, and executed the greatest rescue mission in New York City history. It has been said that, on 9/11, the FDNY had its greatest moment on its worst day. Hence, therein lied my trust in the ability of the FDNY to respond to the looming COVID catastrophe.

As the calamitous days of last March and April unfolded, the parallels between the emergency response to the COVID pandemic and 9/11 were already being drawn. From an operational perspective - a public health crises involving a deadly microscopic pathogen versus a terrorist attack resulting in a massive conflagration and structural collapse – the differences between the two could not have been more stark. Yet, the same bravery and determination displayed by our members was ever-present and unwavering at each.

In very short order, the insidious virus began to take its toll on our Department. With every passing hour the number of deaths in NYC continued to climb, forcing our members to deal with seemingly unending despair. As expected, hundreds of our own were contracting the disease as well, taking them out of the emergency response effort for weeks, and increasing the burden on those healthy enough to remain full-duty. Many became hospitalized, and sadly, several had succumbed to their illness.

Fearful of bringing COVID home to their own families, some members chose to sleep in their cars or hotels rooms for days on end. Soon, staffing levels in the Department were running precariously low. Adjustments were made to schedules so that those

*continued on page 5*

## **Profile**     **Thomas J. Richardson**

*continued from page 1*

had a profound impact on him for his entire career moving forward. Some of these members, and he could not name them all here due to editorial limitations, were FF Lee Ielpi, FF Pete Bondi, FF Larry Gray, FF Richie Evers, FF Dennis Mojica. There are so many more and he will be indebted to them forever.

After spending three years in R-2, Tom was promoted to Lieutenant in August of 1990 and assigned to Battalion 16 covering. After less than a year he transferred back to Brooklyn and was assigned to Engine 235. It was here that he met Lt. Bob Sweeney. Bob was a great student and motivated Tom to study for Captain. E-235 was another formative experience having the opportunity to work with great chiefs in Battalion 57; Artie Sullivan, Harry Rogers, Rich Dipadova, Mike Canty, Dennis Cross and a future Chief of Department, Pete Ganci. Tom was promoted to Captain in March of 1994 and assigned to Division 15 covering. He became the Captain of Engine 234 and learned his craft as a Company Commander under the leadership of the chiefs in Battalion 38 which included former Chief of Department Ed Kilduff.

In 1998 the Department was expanding its Special Operations capabilities and formed five new Squad Companies. Tom took the opportunity to become the charter Captain of Squad 270 in South Queens. This was probably the most rewarding experience of his career. He was on the Battalion Chiefs list so this assignment helped to prepare him for his promotion which occurred in September of 2000.

Upon promotion to Battalion Chief, Tom was assigned to the Bureau of Operations along with a group of other newly promoted Battalion Chiefs. They worked for then Chief of Operations Dan Nigro. Although not realizing it at the time, this assignment has proven to have been very valuable in light of where he finds himself today. Chief Nigro offered his experience and wisdom and that enabled Tom to continue his professional development as a chief officer. After completing a ten month assignment in Operations, Tom was assigned to Battalion 53 in Queens in July of 2001. This assignment was short lived. The day after September 11, 2001 he was detailed to the Special Operations Battalion as a result of the deaths of BC John Paollilo,

BC John Moran and BC Charlie Kasper. He remained on this detail until December of 2002 when he was assigned to Battalion 38. During his assignment in the SOC Battalion he worked at the WTC site for five months representing SOC at interagency meetings and assisting with the rescue and recovery effort. This was a challenging but humbling experience in light of the tragedy that the Department had endured.

Tom would spend 12 years working in Battalion 38 learning his craft as a chief. Working with the members of the 38 Battalion units was the honor of his career. He learned much from all of them including the chiefs he worked with; BC Rich Bienenstein, BC Kevin Byrnes, BC Steve Zaderiko, BC John Hodgens, BC Fred Schaaf, BC Mike Derudder, and BC Steve Treco; all gentlemen and quiet professionals whom he developed a great respect for.

After being unsuccessful on two Deputy Chief's exams, Tom gave it one final try in 2013. He was successful and subsequently promoted to Deputy Chief in November of 2014. He was assigned to Division 15 and got a spot there in March of 2015. He took Wayne Cartwright's spot after Wayne was promoted to Brooklyn Borough Commander. Tom had the good fortune to work with Wayne during his years in Battalion 38 and they developed a close working relationship. Wayne was an excellent Division Commander whom Tom had great respect for. During his assignment in Division 15 he learned the role of Deputy Chief under the new Division Commander Mike Ajello, DC Steve Moro and DC Dave Jakobowski. All of these chiefs had a great deal of experience both tactically and administratively, offering their mentoring without hesitation. Chief Richardson is grateful for having had the opportunity to work with all of them.

In 2017, Chief of Training Jim Hodgens asked Tom if he would be interested in coming to work for him as the Chief of the Fire Academy. After much thought, he accepted and was promoted to Deputy Assistant Chief in June of 2017. Training has always been a passion for Tom and this was a fitting assignment. Working for Jim Hodgens was a pleasure. Jim's passion for training and his commitment to making it the best it could be was impressive. He was a great

*continued on page 5*

## Profile Thomas J. Richardson


*continued from page 4*

example of what a staff chief should be and his mentoring was invaluable. Tom will always be grateful for that opportunity. After Jim's retirement, Tom would be promoted to Assistant Chief and designated as the Chief of Training in June of 2018. It was a logical succession for Training and again a tremendous learning experience. The staff at the Bureau of Training was outstanding, always trying to improve and innovate. This was a wonderful and rewarding assignment.

Being promoted to Chief of Operations in February of 2019 was quite an honor. Reflecting on those who have served in this position and other Staff positions made this especially humbling and a bit intimidating. Tom was committed to making sure that communication with the field was a priority and letting the troops know that the mission of the Bureau of Operations Staff was to support them each and every day. As he reflects on the past almost four years as a Staff Chief he has been so impressed with the level of talent that is and has been represented on the Staff. Their leadership and dedication is something to be proud of.

The men and women of the FDNY serve in a noble profession. There is no greater calling than living a life of service. Each and every day our members respond to calls for assistance. Fires, emergencies, medical emergencies; whatever the situation, they respond prepared and ready to help. As many have said before, we have the greatest job on earth!

As is evident, the more than 40 year career for Chief Richardson has been fulfilling as well as an honor and a privilege to serve. He has truly been living the dream. He could not have done this without the support of his family, especially his beloved wife Julie of 39 years. He has three children, Jessica, Jenna and Thomas (TJ). TJ is an EMT in the Bureau of EMS. Tom has four grandchildren; Ava, Chase, Jackson and Hayden.

Tom has a Bachelors Degree from Empire State College and a Masters Degree from the Center for Homeland Security, Naval Postgraduate School. 


## View from the Top

### John Sudnik, Chief of Department

*continued from page 3*

who were healthy enough to remain working were required to do so more often.

Once medically cleared, those who recovered from COVID illness came back to the frontlines to provide much needed relief to a worn and weary workforce. Through it all, not once did they believe this was somebody else's problem to solve. Against the odds, they were going to get it done. Despite facing certain danger and unknown risk, it was their duty to keep responding. As of this writing, almost 7100 FDNY members have returned to full-duty from a COVID diagnosis. I am in awe of their dedication, and so extremely proud to be a leader in this great Department.

The fires and emergencies that firefighters, fire officers, EMTs and paramedics respond to on a daily basis are dangerous, challenging, and unpredictable. They regularly put their lives on the line to protect life and property in communities all across the City. With rigorous and on-going training programs, they are prepared to operate safely and efficiently at all types of incidents. Fortunately for us all, it is their commitment to service and willingness to sacrifice that truly makes them extraordinary, especially when dealing with unimaginable disasters like terrorist attacks and global pandemics. Rest assured, at the next catastrophic event, FDNY Chief Officers can be certain our heroes will step up to fatefully discharge their duties and fulfill the mission – it's in their DNA. 

### IN COMMAND

Published by the Fire Chiefs Association, FDNY

Fax/Info 516.967.6398

[www.fdnnyfirechiefs.org](http://www.fdnnyfirechiefs.org)

George K. Healy  
*President*

Peter J. McGrath  
*Vice President*

Thomas K. Martin  
*2nd Vice President*

Daniel J. Sheehan  
*Secretary*

Dean Koester  
*Treasurer*

Richard Olivieri  
*Editor*



## Retirees Corner

**Thomas K. Martin (Batt. 3, Ret.)**

Hello retirees! Isn't the first day of the month a fun day? Those checks just keep coming in. I am in my 20th year and loving every minute. Getting tired of virtual this and virtual that? Hopefully the 20th anniversary of 9/11 will be in person..... The 343 Ride will be riding to D.C. this year to reprise the first ride in 2002..... Looking forward to the FCA golf outing on Aug.2. Get your "Big Bucks" raffle ticket (\$20,000 cash in prize money) from Rocco Rinaldi; roccor56@optonline.net. Winners announced at the Aug.2 golf outing..... Enjoyed lunch with my ski group including recently retired Yonkers Fire Commissioner Bob Sweeney(Sweeney Bob). see photo. Organized by Vinny Saverese on the Hudson River in Middletown.....looking forward to a great gathering at Montauk on Sept. 14-15, which will be in full swing with Dan the Man on the blender! .....Ed Fusco's Brooklyn Breakfast at the Lindenhurst Diner started back up in March..... sad news with passing of long time WNYF editor Janet Kimmerly from COVID-19 in early April. A good friend and wonderful person. R.I.P.....Congratulations to Lt. Wilbur L. Hutchins,E.285 celebrating his 100th birthday. I have 19 to go to catch him. Tentative date for his party is May 15th. Wilbur is a WWII Army vet. He was appointed to FDNY Eng 217 1/1/47. Subsequently worked in Eng 317 and retired as a Lt. In Eng 285 9/73. Congrats to you Wilbur!!!! Emerald Golf Association (my club) starting the season on 4/26 at the Port Jeff Country Club. Be good to see all the guys again. About 120 in the club and approximately 60-70% FDNY retired including two Commissioners! Remember... live each day as if it's your last because one day you will be right! 🚒

## The Secretary's Desk

**Daniel J. Sheehan** *continued from page 2*

outstanding performance at recent multiple alarm fires, and gave a kudos to the retirees who trained us right! He highlighted one recent incident where a member was saved from certain death by properly wearing his PPE, as an AC unit fell from an upper story window and struck him. He also gave a big shout out to the folks working with him in Ops, Chief Jack Hodgins, Chief Richard Blatus, Chief Mike Gala, Chief Dean Koester, Retired Chiefs Wayne Cartwright and Joe Woznica, and of course, Chief Dave Morkal. Chief Dean Koester gave us an update on the status of the vaccination program.

April

Albert Connolly from NYC Fire Department pensions was with us for the April meeting. Although we started a little later than scheduled due to some technical issues, the rest of the meeting went very smoothly. The always entertaining Al gave us some insight into the very confusing world of pension options. More importantly, he gave us his email address so we could reach out to him with any questions. Thanks Albert! 🚒



## New Members

The Fire Chiefs Association welcomes the following new members:

*Michael P. Accardi*  
*Aldo J. Adissi*  
*Michael G. Brady*  
*Stuart T. Carver*  
*Joseph M. Castellano*  
*Sean P. Danis*  
*John W. Davies*  
*Michelle Fitzsimmons*  
*James Fleming*  
*Paul M. Geoghegan*  
*Victor Giordonello*  
*Brian P. Gomoka*  
*John P. Gormley*  
*Raymond M. Heuser, Jr.*  
*Andrew R. Holzmaier*  
*Matthew A. Jacobs*  
*Robert Kehoe*  
*Vincent J. LaMalfa*  
*Devon J. Maguire*  
*Daniel J. Maye*  
*John P. McGann*  
*Joseph W. McGee*  
*Robert McKeefrey*  
*Timothy W. McNamara*  
*Arthur M. Mezzano*  
*James P. Miller*  
*Richard J. O'Keefe*  
*August W. Orlando, Jr.*  
*Harry H. Poole, Jr.*  
*Simon Ressler*  
*Edward E. Ryan*  
*Hugh B. Smith*  
*Robert M. Sobocienski*  
*Michael J. Thomson*  
*William D. Ventura, Jr.*

## Retired Members

The Fire Chiefs Association wishes the following members a happy and healthy retirement:

*Richard W. Bienenstein*  
*Peter J. Blum*  
*John J. Buckheit*  
*Gary F. Chamberlain*  
*Anthony W. De Vita Jr.*  
*Daniel E. DiMartino*  
*Brian J. Foley*  
*James P. Ginty*  
*Michael P. Lampasso*  
*Peter M. Leicht*  
*Michael T. Light*  
*Robert S. Lombardo*  
*James W. Manning*  
*Michael E. McPartland*  
*Vincent Mosca*  
*Robert X. Mosier*  
*Peter J. Mulhall*  
*Thomas A. Robson*  
*John W. Rozas*  
*Joseph C. Saccente*  
*Richard K. Schlueck*  
*Russell J. Strobel*  
*Steven K. Treco*  
*Joseph M. Woznica*  
*Daniel W. Zecchini Jr.*



## COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Executive Board would like to express its deepest sympathy for all of our members and their families who have been so tragically affected by this disease including one of our most active members, Al Petrocelli, Sr. (pictured).

Al was a wonderful guy and a fixture (along with his son Al, Jr.) at all of our meetings and events. He will be terribly missed. May we keep them and the rest of our loved ones in our thoughts and prayers.



## Promotion Lists Status as of 4/17/21

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Exam #</i>	<i>Date Established</i>	<i>Last Promotion (# on list)</i>	<i>Last # Reached</i>
Firefighter O/C	7001	02/27/2019	11/12/2019 (44,507)	1566
Firefighter Prom	7501	10/11/2017	11/12/2019 (1486)	1456
Lieutenant	5534	08/24/2016	04/17/2021 (1191)	778
Captain	5507	08/24/2016	04/17/2021 (652)	402
Battalion Chief	9542	05/13/2020	04/17/2021 (194)	47
Deputy Chief	7527	09/13/2019	04/17/2021 (77)	27



